

DIALOGUE

Between a Quaker and his Neighbour in HERTFORD,
about the MURDER of

Mrs. Sarah Stout.

Quaker. *Th*ee art an early man to-day, methinks Neighbour, to have been abroad, and coming back already.

Neighb. I must be so now; I have been to see my folks at work in the field; for he that will have business go forward, must be both at the beginning and end of it himself, or else it will do: And the Weather of late has been pretty catching, which makes me willing to improve my time as well as I can; and according to the ancient Proverb, *To make Hay while the Sun shines.*

Qua. Thou art in the right on't, and I commend thee for thy industry: well, wilt come in, and smoke a pipe of Tobacco?

Neigh. I don't care if I do; for now I have set my folks to work, I am a little at leisure; besides I have a mind to talk with you.

Qua. With all my heart, Neighbour: Well, what is it thou wouldst talk with me about?

Neigh. About! Why, I would ask you, What's the best news? for I know you must hear it, if there be any, your business calls you so much abroad.

Qua. Why truly Neighbour, as to news, I know none; for tho' I can't, as thee says, but hear a great deal, yet I seldom regard it; for, there is scarce one report in twenty, that is to be credited.

Neigh. Nay, that's true enough: But what I intended was, What do you hear about the Tryal of the Gentlemen for the murder of Mrs. Sarah Stout? It makes a great noise in the world, I assure you: I suppose you have heard it.

Qua. No, I didn't; for I was out of Town then, or else I believe I should. But I have read the Printed Account of it, which I suppose is truth, because it is attested by the Judge.

Neigh. Yes, so it is, for I have read the Book, and heard the Tryal from the beginning to the end. Well, since you have read it, what do you say to that Tryal?

Qua. Why, I say, the persons indicted for that Murder, were every one acquitted.

Neigh. That's true enough every body knows: But do you think they were acquitted fairly, or not?

Qua. 'Tis none of my place to censure the proceedings of the King's Courts of Justice; I believe the King desires Justice may be impartially administered, and I believe to that end the King makes choice of the best Judges. But after all, to be plain with thee, I am of an Opinion Sarah Stout was murder'd.

Neigh. If the murder'd her self, she was murder'd; so that your words are equivocal: Do you think she was murder'd by the Gentlemen that were try'd for it?

Qua. Wouldst have me to condemn those whom the Law has acquitted? Or, is't not possible she may be murder'd, and yet not murder'd by them? And as to her murdering her self, I believe nothing of it.

Neigh. That she was found dead in the water, that's plain; and if she did not throw her self in, she was thrown in by some body else: But there's no such thing appears, and therefore I believe she drowned her self.

Qua. What reason hast thou to think so?

Neigh. Reason enough: For first, That she was not murder'd for Money, appears plainly; because there was six Pounds found in her Pocket when she was taken up out of the water; and therefore it was not done by Thieves or Robbers; for they would have taken away her Money at least, if they had not strip her too. Nor did it appear upon the Tryal, that Mr. C. had any Bonds or Mortgages of hers in his hands, by which he might make any advantage: Nor had he got her with Child, by which any shame might have been prevented. And therefore, since he could have no interest in it, why should it be suppos'd he did it at all? Nay, there had kindness past between 'em that day, and in all probability might have been more. We don't hear of any quarrel between 'em, that might give him any dislike, or provoke him to such a barbarous villainy: And to think that a Gentleman should murder a young woman that had a kindness for him, merely for murder's sake, appears to me a very unreasonable thing.

Qua. Thou seem'st to imply, I think, that Sarah Stout was murder'd by S. C. and I have already told thee, that I have nothing to say, either to him, or the others that were indicted for her murder, for the Law has acquitted them; or otherwise I could easily answer all that thou hast said: I could tell thee, That he might have an interest in her Death, tho' it did not appear in Court; that some men are so tenacious of receiving an affront, that many have been kill'd for giving it. Nay, the very kindnesses that some persons have done, has been the occasion of their death; and the refusing to do such kindnesses as have been desir'd of them, has procur'd the death of others: That there might be something desir'd of Sarah, that she was not willing to grant, is what might be, tho' she did not think it proper to make any one acquainted with it; and that such kindness being refus'd, might be a sufficient ground of revenge, to such persons as made no conscience of what they did, (for none but such persons could be guilty of so barbarous a crime. Now it appears by the Tryal, that one of the persons indicted has pretended Love to her, which she refus'd; What if he had stomach'd that refusal of hers to that degree, that he was resolv'd to be reveng'd of her for it? Does not this appear rational enough? And, does not the discourse of the persons at the Inn, at the very time when either this murder was perpetrated, or very near it, seem to countenance this? Why else should one of them say, *Her business was done*; and, *that he would pay his word, her courting days were over*? And, this to be spoken by pretended strangers, that very night she was murder'd, was enough to have made it

suspicious to me: And to confute what thou hast asserted, that there could be no interest in it; it being plain that there might be (I don't say there was) the interest of serving a friend, which is counted by some (tho' in as bad a cause as this) a piece of generosity.

Neigh. I confess what you urge, has more weight in it, than I at first imagin'd: But tho' I think this was sworn, yet it was afterwards confuted by several witnesses; which I think appears by the Tryal Printed at large.

Qua. Had that been done, it would have given great satisfaction both to me and several more, but all that ever I could find of it in the Printed Tryal (for I have already told thee I didn't hear it) is, that the persons charged with it, absolutely deny it; which no doubt they would do, had they been never so guilty. There was two witnesses positive to the very words, and against this, they have nothing to say, but that they positively deny it; and yet are forc'd to acknowledge, there was some discourse of Sarah Stout; but so far from what the witnesses depos'd, that it was not possible they should so mistake 'em. And thee may't likewise observe, That the witnesses not only depos'd this, but that the trouble that was upon their spirits, by reason of these words, (after they had heard of Sarah Stout's death) was so great, that they could not rest till they had reveal'd it: For Martha Gurry deposes, *That she was so troubled in mind she could not rest, night nor day: And that she told her Husband, if he would not tell of it, (that is, if he would not discover those suspicious words spoken by those persons in their house the night before Sarah's death) she would tell of it her self, for she was not able to live.* So that it appears to be only love to Truth and Justice, that put Gurry and his wife upon discovering these words, and not any malice or prejudice; for their interest lay on the contrary side: They might have expected those men to have been their guests again, had they not discover'd this; which now they could not expect: And therefore I do not doubt at all, but what they depos'd was the truth. Which, I must tell thee, looks very suspiciously in my judgment.

Neigh. This does indeed bear a little hard upon 'em; but yet I think I have something to offer, that will take off the force of that you have said, and that is this. That these Gentlemen had several persons of very good worth and quality appear'd in their behalf, and declar'd 'em to be men of an unsported Reputation: One says, *He believes five thousand pounds would not tempt one of 'em to do such a sad.* Another says, *He knew him ever since he was two years old, and never knew him but a civil'd man, given to no debauchery.* Another says, *He has known him twenty years, that he has a general good character among his neighbours, for a man fair in his practice, an honest man, and a man of a good conversation.* And then, as to another of 'em, a person of quality testifies, not only that *He was always reckon'd an honest man in his practice, but has the general character of a good natur'd man; one well provided for by his father, has a good estate, and is in a good place, and in good practice; and consequently not like to do such an action.* Another person of quality testifies, *He has always behav'd himself well, and has the character of an honest gentleman.* Another testifies both as to him, and Mr. M. that *He believes they would not have been guilty of such an ill thing, to have gain'd the County.* And as to the other, several Gentlemen give the like character of him, and say, *They believe money could not tempt him to do any act of that kind.* But what I have further to offer, is that which I think is more convincing; and that is, That it is not at all probable that Gentlemen that were not either mad, or drunk, or both, should be so foolish and imprudent, as to discourse publicly in the presence of several persons, after that rate that is sworn against these, if they either had, or design'd to have, a hand in such a thing: Could they possibly abandon themselves to so much inconsideration, as not to think that such discourses might be remembered to their prejudice, and tend to the discovery of themselves as the murderers? These must be granted to be sensible men, well skill'd in the Law; and therefore well knew the danger such discourses would expose them to; and knowing all this, it would argue them to be guilty of the highest degree of madness and folly, to talk at that rate.

Qua. I have already told thee, and do so again, That I have nothing to say against these men; the Law has acquitted them, and therefore I have nothing to do to condemn them; I only tell thee my private sentiments, and what I urge, is more for discourse sake, than any thing else: Tho' to be plain with thee, I see no such great matter in what thou hast alledg'd in their behalf: And, had I been of Council for the K. I would have answer'd thee thus: I have nothing to object against all that these persons have testified in behalf of the prisoners; I am willing to grant that they speak according to their knowledge, and what they think: But what does all that they have said amount to, more than this, That the prisoners have always carried it very fair to the world, and when they committed this fact for which they are indicted, they did not acquaint these persons with it? But there's none of all these Gentlemen can say they are not guilty of this fact. 'Tis true, they don't believe it, and they believe money would not tempt 'em to it; no, not tho' they might gain the whole County: But, what then? it does not follow for all that, but that they might do it: There might be other motives to tempt them to it, besides that of money. There are men in the world that will post-pone all other considerations to that of serving their friend: And probably that might be the case here: Suppose a person courts one for her fortune; he receives a denial, and upon that meditates revenge;

revenge: he tells his thoughts to two or three friends; and they promise to assist him, out of a principle of generosity (as they think) to serve their friend, which no money could have oblig'd 'em to do: I have heard of such things that have been done; and wherein even greater hazards have been run to serve a Friend, and why not in this case? There is a famous instance of this in K. Charles the Second's time: One *Mason* was accus'd of having a hand in a Plot against the Government, and was order'd to be carried down to York, in order to be try'd, and committed to the charge of eight Life-guard-men to carry him down; but one *Blood*, and three of his companions, who had a particular kindness for *Mason*, went after the Life-guard-men, kill'd two or three of them, and rescued the prisoner. Here the hazard was much greater than in the case before us, (which might be much easier effected, and better concealed) and yet the thing was undertaken and effected, out of love to their friend. And, as to what these think it is so unanswerable, to wit, That unless they were mad, or drunk, or both, they would never have expos'd themselves by discoursing, as they did, so publicly; to that I have a sufficient answer; First, That they did so discourse, there is the positive testimony of two persons upon Oath. Secondly, One of the prisoners themselves does in part acknowledge it; for he says, in page 41 of the printed Tryal, *Possibly I might say these words, My friend may be in mischief; but I confess it with saying, It was in jocular conversation.* But Thirdly, Notwithstanding their denying it, and making their publick discoursing thus, a plea for their innocence (which by the way, might be one reason of their talking so publicly) yet the Judge in his charge to the Jury, seems not to make the least question of the words being spoken, as I think indeed he had no reason, and tells the Jury, *They talked at a strange rate; and that they were very strange expressions; and so leaves it to the Jury; which was all that he could do.* So that I do not find, that those words testified by *Gurry*, or his wife, to wit; *That her business was done. That there was an end of her courting days. And, That a friend of theirs was even with her by this time.* Were at all invalidated: And I am sure thee and I must own, that (as the Judge said) *They were very strange expressions*, considering the time when they were spoken.

Neigh. But does it not plainly appear that she was melancholly? And, might the not in a melancholly humour, being under some great temptation, fling her self into the water, and so be drowned?

Qua. I cannot deny, indeed, but that such a thing might be; but there is a great deal of difference between What might be, and What was? For no such thing was prov'd: It did not appear she was melancholly, by her sending for S. C. to dinner; nor inviting him afterwards to supper; nor by the care she took to have a fire in his chamber, and his bed well warm'd. These did not appear to be the actions of a melancholly or distracted person. And as to her being drowned, that neither is not so evident; for it appears that there was no water in her body; and it is a common opinion, that when persons are thrown into the water dead, they won't sink, as it seems she did not: But being there are such diversities of opinions in that case, I will not be positive therein.

Neigh. But I think nothing could be made out more clearly, than that Mrs. *Sarah* was in love with Mr. C. and would willingly have cohabited and have lain with him that night: but he refusing to comply with her, and going to his lodging at Mr. *Barefoot's*, she went and drowned her self. So that here is not only her melancholly proved, but the cause of it likewise: And I have heard, that love melancholly is the most dangerous.

Qua. I do not see this so clearly made out, as thou seemest to imagine. *Sarah* was a young woman, and of a good fortune; and if she lik'd not to have had any of our Friends, there were Husbands enough to be had, without courting a married man: And yet, ev'n if she had been so far left to her self, as to have done that, I have heard that person has had a greater kindness for the Female Sex, than to let any of 'em make away themselves for want of giving 'em a nights lodging. And, to do him justice, it does not appear to me, that he treated her at that rate as to cause her to despair of obtaining such a kindness from him: If indeed he had told her (as I think if the case had been so, he might very well have done) that he could not but admire at her impudence to desire such a thing of him; that she made herself thereby a shame to her Sex, a scandal to her Profession, and a reproach to her Relations; that there were other men enough to satisfy her Lust; that for his own part, he was a married man, and upon that account, could not possibly gratify her inclinations. Or, if he had said to her, as another good man did, on the like occasion, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* And to had exhorted her to mortify those unruly affections, that could not but issue in her eternal ruin, if her desires should be gratified; and that however they might think to conceal it from the eye of the World, yet that their wickedness would be open to the omniscient eye of the Divine Being. Had he indeed taken this method, *Sarah* might have had some reason to despair of obtaining her ends of him, (if any such ends she had.) But for ought appears to me, the case was quite otherwise; and *Sarah* had more reason to hope, than to despair, by those Topics that were us'd to her that night: For, the Objections were only That it was an accident that had oblig'd him to take up his lodgings in another place; That the family where he was so oblig'd to live, was sitting up for him; That his staying at her house under these circumstances, would in probability, provoke the censure of the Town and Country; That therefore (only) he could not say, whatever his inclination otherwise might be. Now I appeal to thee, whether there be any thing in these Objections that might cause *Sarah* to despair, if she had any such desires of obtaining them: Here was no positive denial, no mention of the unlawfulness of it; but only *there happened an accident which rendered it not so convenient that time, as it might be another.* Now, had *Sarah* been all that she was endeavour'd to be represented, what occasion had she to despair of enjoying what, it may be, she desir'd? For my part, according as this person treated her, I see none. And therefore, if she did make away her self (which I can by no means think) out of a despair of not obtaining what she desir'd of him; I must do the man that justice (as I have already told thee) to declare, That in my opinion he was no occasion of it.

Neigh. But since you believe that the Gentleman gave her no occasion to despair of obtaining her ends from him; and consequently that she had no reason to make away her self, which you believe he did not; I say then, what reason can you have to think, that he should murder her, who, as you suppose, gave her so much hopes of obtaining her desires another time?

Qua. I know not what reason thee hast to ask me such a question, for I never said that I thought he murder'd her, nor any other of the persons indicted for it. I do indeed believe she did not murder her self, because I see no reason I have to think so; and I have shew'd thee that those reasons alledged, are not sufficient to cause me to change my opinion. And I affirm there are some circumstances relating to the persons indicted, that to me look very suspicious. There is one thing that I think would give a great deal of light into the business, which I indeed wonder'd was never enquir'd into, neither by the Judges, the King's Council, nor the Grand Jury. But yet when I consider how long that Tryal lasted, and what great variety of Evidence there was, it is no wonder at all that something might be omitted; but that which I intended was this, Thee mayst remember, (for thou it seemest was at the Tryal) that *Sarah Walker* deposes, That when she went up stairs, to warm the bed, she left her mistress and S. C. in the room together; and about a quarter of an hour after, she heard the door shut, and when she came down, there was neither of them in the house. Now, methinks it would have been necessary to have enquir'd, Whether *Sarah* went out with him; and if so, how far, and where they parted? For *Sarah Walker* says nothing of hearing the door shut, but once; and then she thought he was going with his Letter. I think a fuller account of his leaving her, might have given much more light into the matter. But being omitted at the Tryal, I only mention this, as my particular thoughts. However I cannot be satisfy'd at all about the Tryal, more especially since I have read the *Hertford Letter* newly come out; at the latter end of which, the Author, after having Learnedly handled the point, closes with his Sentiments of her death, and two strange remarks in the Tryal. viz.

If this Gentlewoman was not Drowned, as the Doctors and Surgeons for the Prisoners seem to insinuate, the Query then will be, How she came to her End? With submission to better Judgments, I shall here offer my private Sentiments concerning it: I am induc'd to believe, she was knocked down with a Blow on her left Ear, from the large Settlement of Blood there, which, as Mrs. *Kimpton* Swears, was as much as her Hand could cover, and more; after she was fell'd to the Ground by the Blow, it is probable, with the Gripe of a strong Hand, she was Throated, from the Stagnation of Blood on both sides of her Neck, under her Ears, which Mr. *John Dimdale Jun.* Swears there was; and from the Settlement of Blood on her Breast, I am inclin'd to believe, That the Person that Throated her, to support his Hand, that he might Gripe the stronger, rested his Arm on her Breast, which occasioned the Stagnation there. His remarks are, How Mr. *Stephen* was taken with a strange Fit, just after the Petty-Jury went out, which disturbed the whole Court; and how a *Wine-Cooper* in *Southwark*, who came down as an Evidence for the Prisoners, fell into a sort of Distraction; and all the time of the Trial was mightily discomposed in his Mind, so that he was fain to be tyed in Bed, yet would often ask how the Trial went, and whether they were like to be cleared; and would often tell the People about him, that he had done a very bad thing, but would not confess what, tho' often urg'd to it.

Neigh. The Tryal lasted many hours, and many Witnesses were examined; and both Judge and Jury were so fatigu'd with the tediousness thereof, that it was impossible to think of every thing. But it did appear plainly, tho her Body had no violence offer'd to it; that it sunk in the water as low as the Stakes would give it leave; that Mr. C. went immediately out of the house to the *Glove and Dolphin*, and from thence to his own lodgings; from whence he went out no more that night: And, by comparing all what the Witnesses said, as to point of time, it was impossible he should do it; and what was impossible to be done, we may be sure was not done: So that I think the Jury brought in a very honest Verdict, especially as to him. As to the other Gentlemen, they appear all to be of fair reputations, and I could heartily wish, no such words had been spoken; and then I think, that they neither could not have been under the least suspicion of guilt, tho' I am full of the mind they are all innocent.

Qua. For my part, I don't accuse 'em; and for their own sakes wish they may be so. But tho' they be all as truly innocent as the his pronounc'd them; why may not *Sarah* have been murdered by some other persons, and from some other motives that we know nothing of? For she had not without reason, by her sober and blameless conversation, acquir'd the reputation of a virtuous and modest young woman from our whole Town; and I appeal to thee, whether ever thou sawest any one action, by which she might forfeit it; or that might lay any imputation upon her? And not only accounted virtuous, but prov'd she dy'd for the following Certificate.

Hertford. April, 28. 1699.

WE whose Names are here under-written, having examined the Body of Mrs. *Sarah Stout*, Deceased, do find the Uterus perfectly Free and Empty, and of the natural Figure and Magnitude, as usually in Virgins. We found no Water in the Stomach, Intestines, Abdomen, Lungs or Cavity of the Thorax.

John Dimdale, Sen. John Dimdale, Jun. Samuel Camlin.
Robert Dimdale. William Coatsworth. Daniel Phillips.

Neigh. For my part, I must do her memory that justice, however she came by her death, as to declare I never knew her guilty of any unbecoming action, though I have known her from her child-hood: She was not indeed so brisk and airy as other young Women are; but that I always attributed to her being one of your opinion.

Qua. Well, Neighbour, I have told thee my Sentiments of it: And tho' I neither do, nor can accuse any; yet I believe she never made away with her self: But by what means she came by her Death, we must leave to Him, who in His due time, will bring to Light all the sudden Works of Darkness; with every secret thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.